



### **Education Department Releases Guidance on Homeless Children and Youth**

The U.S. Department of Education today released guidance to states and school districts on the new provisions in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) for supporting homeless youth. The new provisions address the needs of homeless individuals, and ensure educational rights and protections for homeless children and youth. The guidance released today will assist state and local partners in understanding and implementing the new law in order to better protect and serve homeless students and help schools in providing these students with much needed stability, safety, and support. The guidance was informed by the input of a diverse group of stakeholders to best address the needs of homeless youth.

“Homeless children and youth face a number of barriers to getting the education they deserve and the services they need to succeed in school and beyond,” said U.S. Secretary of Education John B. King Jr. “As a kid, home was a scary and unpredictable place for me and I moved around a lot after my parents passed away. I know from my own experience and from my conversations with homeless students that school can save lives. It is our hope that the guidance we are releasing today will serve as a tool to help states and districts better serve homeless children and youth – we can and we must do better.”

During the 2013-14 school year, more than 1.3 million homeless children and youth were enrolled in public schools. Research shows that these students experience significant academic, social, and socio-emotional challenges, and that being homeless is associated with lower school achievement and increased risk of dropping out of school. In addition, students who experience high mobility and attend many different schools over the course of their education often slip academically with each move. Recognizing these challenges, in this guidance offers new technical assistance on promising practices for helping homeless youth through the implementation of homeless education requirements at the State and local levels, focusing particular attention on changes under ESSA.

“The Department of Education’s guidance will provide schools and school districts in Washington state and across the country with critical tools and resources to increase the educational success of homeless children and youths from preschool to higher education,” said Senator Patty Murray, ranking member of the Senate HELP Committee. “I was proud to fight for these improvements in our new education law and I thank the Department for working with me to prioritize and serve these students so they can achieve at the highest levels and secure a pathway to the middle class.”

“NAEHCY members include the school district liaisons who are on the front lines in the struggle against family and youth homelessness,” said Barbara Duffield, director of policy and programs at the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. “In many

communities, liaisons are the only adults focused on helping homeless students meet their basic needs, and access the education and early care that is their best path to a better life. Today's guidance will help ensure that liaisons are able to carry out their duties, per the ESSA amendments, so they have the time and the training to identify and support these all-too-often invisible students."

In December 2015, ESSA reauthorized the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youths program, which protects and serves homeless students. The amended McKinney-Vento Act provides new protections for homeless youth, and equips local partners with an essential tool for implementing new provisions in ESSA. The guidance released today helps states, districts, and local partners understand the new provisions, which take effect October 1, 2016. Among other changes, the amended McKinney-Vento Act includes new requirements focused on:

- Identification of homeless children and youths;
- **Making sure that preschool-aged homeless children have access to and receive supportive services;**
- Ensuring coordination with other service providers, including public and private child welfare and social service agencies; law enforcement agencies; juvenile and family courts; agencies providing mental health services; domestic violence agencies; child care providers; runaway and homeless youth centers; providers of services and programs funded under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act; and providers of emergency, transitional, and permanent housing, including public housing agencies, shelter operators, and operators of transitional housing facilities;
- Providing professional development and technical assistance at both the State and local levels;
- Removing enrollment barriers;
- Providing school stability, including the expansion of school of origin to include preschools and receiving schools and the provision of transportation until the end of the school year, even if a student becomes permanently housed;
- Protecting privacy of student records, including information about a homeless child or youth's living situation;
- Improving the dispute resolution process for decisions relating to the educational placement of homeless children and youth
- Increasing the emphasis on college and career readiness; and
- Establishing a new authority for local liaisons to verify the eligibility of homeless children, youths, and families for HUD homeless assistance programs.

To accompany the guidance released today, the Department plans to also release a fact sheet for teachers, principals, counselors and other school staff to provide an overview of the needs of homeless students, the protections for them under the McKinney-Vento Act, and how they can help.

The Department of Education also recently announced changes to streamline the way homeless students gain access to financial aid for college. Included in the changes, all students who indicate on the FAFSA that they're homeless will automatically have the option to select that they've already received an unaccompanied homeless youth determination which means they will be considered "independent" for the purposes of financial aid eligibility, and won't need to provide their parent's financial information. The Department also released a fact sheet to help homeless students navigate the FAFSA. In response to the growing number of homeless students enrolled in public schools, President Obama's fiscal year 2017 budget also calls for a 21 percent increase to the Education for Homeless Children and Youths program, which helps reduce and eliminate educational barriers for homeless children and youth.

**The new guidance in its entirety can be found [here](#). This guidance is part of a series of guidance documents that will be released on the new provisions in ESSA.**

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